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*The Prologue to the Rámáyana of Tulsi Dás. A Specimen translation.*  
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The Sanskrit Rámáyana of Válmíki has been published more than once, with all the advantages of European editorial skill and the most luxurious typography. It has also been translated both in verse and prose, and—in part at least—into Latin as well as into Italian and English. The more popular Hindi version of the same great national Epic can only be read in lithograph or bazar print, and has never been translated in any form into any language whatever. Yet it is no unworthy rival of its more fortunate predecessor. There can of course be no comparison between the polished phraseology of classical Sanskrit and the rough colloquial idiom of Tulsi Dás's vernacular, while the antiquity of Válmíki's poem further invests it with an adventitious interest for the student of Indian history. But on the other hand the Hindi poem is the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of the Hindu race at the present day—a matter of not less practical interest than the creed of their remote ancestors—and its language, which in the course of three centuries has contracted a tinge of archaism, is a study of the greatest importance to the philologist, since it serves to bridge an otherwise impassable chasm between the modern style and the mediæval. It is also less wordy and diffuse than the Sanskrit original, and—probably in consequence of its modern date—is less disfigured by wearisome interpolations and repetitions; while, if it never soars so high as Válmíki in some of his best passages, it maintains a more equable level of poetic diction and seldom sinks with him into such dreary depths of



unmitigated prose. It must also be noted that it is in no sense a translation of the earlier work: the general plan and the management of the incidents are necessarily much the same, but there is a difference in the touch in every detail; and the two poems vary as widely as any two dramas on the same mythological subject by two different Greek tragedians. Even the coincidence of name is an accident; for Tulsi Dás himself called his poem "The Rám-charit-mánas", and the shorter name, corresponding in form to the Iliad or Æneid, was only substituted by his admirers as a handier designation for a popular favourite.

The passage, of which a translation is here submitted, forms the Introduction to the first book. It is at once of less obvious interest and also of much greater difficulty than the narrative portions of the poem. It is valuable, however, as a resumé of popular Hindu theology and metaphysics, and it supplies some personal details of the author's life. Thus we learn from it that he studied at Soron, and commenced writing at Ayudhyá on the festival of Ráma's birthday in the Sambat year 1631, corresponding to 1575, A. D. We need not suppose that he remained long at Ayudhyá, for according to tradition the main body of the poem was composed at Chitrakút. His vindication of himself against his critics is a curious feature. They attacked him for lowering the dignity of his subject by clothing it in the vulgar vernacular. However just his defence may be, it did not succeed in converting the opposite faction; and the professional Sanskrit Pandits, who are their modern representatives, still affect to despise his work as an unworthy concession to the illiterate masses. With this small and solitary exception the book is in every one's hands, from the court to the cottage, and is read or heard and appreciated alike by every class of the Hindu community, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old. The purity of its moral sentiments and the absolute avoidance of the slightest approach to any pruriency of idea—which the author justly advances among his distinctive merits—render it a singularly unexceptionable text-book for native boys. For several years past I have persistently urged its adoption upon the Education Department, and—thanks to Rájá Siva Prasád—extracts from it have now been introduced into our primary schools. It has always been prescribed as the principal test in the Civil Examination for High Proficiency and a Degree of Honour; and it is equally well adapted for both these apparently incongruous purposes. For a Hindu child generally grasps at once the familiar idiom and finds no great difficulty in even the most crabbed passage; while on the other hand both the terminology and the syntactic collocation of the words are in the highest degree perplexing to the European student. The reason is, that an English official as a rule knows only the language of the courts, and has never studied the vernacular of the people: for which neglect he has hitherto had much excuse in the



absence both of a Dictionary and a Grammar. The former want is in course of being supplied by Dr. Fallon; and the latter by Mr. Kellogg of the Allahabad Mission, who has nearly completed a work that promises from the pages I have seen, to be in a remarkable degree both lucid and exhaustive.

It will, I think, be admitted that a poem of such manifold interest should no longer be withheld from the English reader; and the advantages in the way of criticisms and suggestions which I hope to secure from its being generally known that a translation is in progress will, I trust, be a sufficient excuse for occupying so many pages with the following specimen. The notes that I have added are more explanatory than would be required by the members of a learned Society, but they may be found useful by the general public, and I have therefore retained them in their place; since I would have the specimen represent as closely as possible the exact form which it is intended the complete work should assume.

#### BOOK I.—CHILDHOOD.

##### *Sanskrit Invocation.*

I reverence the Goddess of Speech and the Divine Guide,\* who are the inventors of the alphabet; of multiform expression; of the poetic modes and of metre. I reverence Bhaváni and Sankara, the incarnation of Faith and Hope, without whom not even the just can see GOD the great Spirit. I reverence as the incarnation of Sankara the all wise Guru, through whom even the crescent moon is everywhere honoured.† I reverence the king of Bards‡ and the Monkey-king, of pure intelligence, who ever lingered with delight in the holy forest land of Ráma and Sítá's infinite perfection. I bow before Sítá, the beloved of Ráma; the queen of birth, of life and death; the destroyer of sorrow; the cause of happiness. I reverence, under his name of Ráma, the Lord Hari; supreme over all causes; to whose illusive power are subject the whole universe and every supernatural being from Brahma downwards; by whose light truth is made manifest, as when what appeared to be a snake turns out a rope; and by whose feet as by a bark those who

\* By *Váni*, the goddess of speech and *Vináyaka*, the guide, are certainly intended the divinities ordinarily so designated, *viz.* Sarasvati and Ganesa. The translation, however, leaves it open; since some of the Hindu commentators conceive that in this particular passage the reference is rather to Sítá and Lakshman.

† The crescent moon, being one of Sankara's (*i. e.* Siva's) constant symbols, is honoured on his account, though in itself imperfect; while the full moon is honoured for its own sake.

‡ The king of bards is Válmíki, the reputed author of the Sanskrit Rámáyana. The monkey king is of course Hanumán, and the two are brought together more on account of the close similarity of name than for any other reason; *Kavísvara* and *Kapísvara* differing only by a single letter.



will, may pass safely over the ocean of existence. In accord with all the Puránas and different sacred texts and with what has been recorded in the Rámáyana (of Válmíki) and elsewhere, I Tulsi to gratify my own heart's desire have composed these lays of Raghunáth in most choice and elegant modern speech.

*Sorathá 1.*

O Ganes of the grand elephant head, the mention of whose name ensures success, be gracious to me, accumulation of wisdom, store-house of all good qualities ! Thou too, by whose favour the dumb becomes eloquent and the lame can climb the vastest mountain, be favourable to me, O thou that consumest as a fire all the impurities of this iron age. Take up thy abode also in my heart, O thou that slumberest on the milky ocean, with body dark as the lotus and eyes bright as the water lily. O spouse of Uma, clear of hue as the jasmine or the moon, home of compassion, who shewest pity to the humble, shew pity upon me, O destroyer of Kámadeva. I reverence the lotus feet of my master, that ocean of benevolence, Hari incarnate, whose words are like a flood of sunlight on the darkness of ignorance and infatuation.\*

*Chaupái.*

I reverence the pollen-like dust of the lotus feet of my master, bright, fragrant, sweet and delicious ; pure extract of the root of ambrosia, potent to disperse all the attendant ills of life ; like the holy ashes on the divine body of Sambhu, beautiful, auspicious, ecstatic. Applied to the forehead as a *tilak*, it cleanses from defilement the fair mirror of the human mind and enriches it with all the virtues of the Master. By recalling the lustre of the nails of the reverend guru's feet, a divine splendour illumines the soul, dispersing the shades of error with its sun-like glory. How blessed he who takes it to his heart ! the mental vision brightens and expands, the night of the world with its sin and pain fades away ; the actions of Ráma,† like diamonds and rubies, whether obvious or obscure, all alike become clear, in whichever direction the mine is explored.

*Dohá 1.*

By applying this collyrium as it were to the eyes, all good and holy men see and understand his sportive career when on earth, on mountain or in forest, and all the treasures of his grace.

\* The persons addressed in this stanza are Ganes, Sarasvati, Náráyan, and the poet's own spiritual instructor, or guru.

† The simple actions are compared to rubies, which may be picked up on the surface of the ground ; the mysterious actions to diamonds, which have to be dug out of a mine.



*Chaupái.*

The dust of the guru's feet is a soft and charming collyrium, like ambrosia for the eyes, to remove every defect of vision. With this having purified the eyes of my understanding, I proceed to relate the actions of Ráma, the redeemer of the world. First I reverence the feet of the great Brahman saints, potent to remove the doubts engendered by error. In my heart as with my voice I reverence the whole body of the Faithful, mines of perfection; whose good deeds resemble the fruit of the cotton-plant in austerity, purity, and manifold uses, and in painful cleansing from impurities: reverence to them, whatever the age or clime in which their glory was consummated. An assembly of the saints is all joy and felicity, like the great *tirath* Prayág endowed with motion; for faith in Ráma is as the stream of the Ganges; contemplation on Brahma as the Sarasvati; and ritual, dealing with precepts and prohibitions for the purification of this iron age, as the sun-god's daughter the Jamuná. The united flood of the Tribeni is represented by the legends of Hari and of Hara, filling all that hear with delight: the sacred fig tree by faith firm in its own traditions; and Prayág itself by the assembly of the virtuous. Easy of access to all, on any day, at any place, curing all the ills of pious devotees, is this unspeakable, spiritual chief *tirath*, of manifest virtue and yielding immediate fruit.

*Dohá 2.*

At this Prayág of holy men, whoever hears and understands and in spirit devoutly bathes, receives even in this life all four rewards.\*

*Chaupái.*

In an instant behold the result of the immersion; the crow becomes a parrot and the goose a swan. Let no one marvel at hearing this, for the influence of good company is no mystery. Válmíki, Nárada and the jar-born Agastya† have told its effect upon themselves. Whatever moves in the water or on the earth or in the air; every creature in the world, whether animate or inanimate, that has attained to knowledge, or glory, or salvation, or power,

\* The four rewards are *káma*, *artha*, *dharma*, *moksha*; that is, pleasure, wealth, religious merit, and final salvation.

† Válmíki confessed to Ráma that he had once been a hunter and had taken the life of many innocent creatures, till he fell in with the seven Rishis, who converted him and taught him to express his penitence by constantly repeating the word *mara*, *mara*. As this is Ráma read backwards, it acted as a spell and advanced him to the highest degree of sanctity.

Similarly Nárada confessed to Vyása, the author of the Puránas, that he was by birth only the son of a poor slave-girl, and had become a saint simply by eating the fragments of food left by the holy men who frequented his master's house.

Agastya also declared to Mahádeva that by birth he was the meanest of all creatures, and had only attained to miraculous powers by the influence of good company.



or virtue, by any work, at any time or place, has triumphed through association with the good; neither the world nor the Veda knows of any other expedient. Intercourse with the good is attainable only by the blessing of Ráma, and without it wisdom is impossible: it is the root of all joy and felicity, its flowers are good works and its fruit perfection. By it the wicked are reformed, as by the touch of the philosopher's stone a vile metal becomes gold. If by mischance a good man falls into evil company, like the jewel in a serpent's head, he still retains his character. Brahma, Vishnu, Mahádeva; the wisest of the poets; all have failed to describe the supremacy of virtue; for me to tell it is as it were for a costermonger to expatiate on the excellence of a set of jewels.

*Dohá 3-4.*

I reverence the saints of equable temperament, who regard neither friend nor foe; like a gracious flower which sheds its fragrance alike on both infolding hands.\* Ye Saints, whose upright intention, whose catholic charity and whose ready sympathy I acknowledge, hear my child-like prayer, be gracious to me and inspire me with devotion to the feet of Ráma.

*Chaupái.*

Again, I would propitiate those saintly wretches† who without a cause swerve right or left; with whom a neighbour's loss is gain; who rejoice in desolation and weep over prosperity; who are as an eclipse to the full-moon glory of Hari and Hara; who become as a giant with a thousand arms to work another's woe; who have a thousand eyes to detect a neighbour's faults, but, like flies on *ghi*, settle on his good points only to spoil them; quick as fire, relentless as hell; rich in crime and sin as Kuver is in gold; like an eclipse for the clouding of friendship, and as dead asleep as Kumbha-karan‡ to everything good; if they can do any injury, as ready to sacrifice themselves as hailstones, that melt after destroying a crop; spiteful as the great serpent, with a thousand tongues; and like Prithuráj,§ with a thousand ears, to tell and hear of others' faults; like the thousand-eyed Indra, too, ever delighting in much strong drink and in a voice of thunder.

\* Though the right hand is the one by which it has been plucked, and the left that in which it is held and preserved.

† In the following lines the poet defends himself by anticipation against possible objections, and roundly abuses the whole army of critics.

‡ Rávan's gigantic brother, Kumbha-karan, obtained as a boon from Brahmá, that whenever he had satisfied his voracious appetite, the slumber of repletion might be of the longest and deepest, and that he might only wake to eat again.

§ It is not related that Prithuráj had really ten thousand ears, but only that he prayed that he might be as quick to hear whatever redounded to the glory of God as if his ears were so many.



*Dohá 5.*

I know when they hear of philosophers, who regard friend and foe both as friends, they are enraged ; but I clasp my hands and entreat them piteously.

*Chaupái.*

I have performed the rôle of supplication, nor will they forget their part. However carefully you may bring up a crow, it will still be a crow and a thief. I propitiate at once the feet of saints and sinners, who each give pain, but with a difference : for the first kill by absence, while the second torture by their presence : as opposite as a lotus and a leech, though both alike are produced in water. Good and bad thus resemble nectar and intoxicating drink, which were both begotten by the one great ocean :\* each by its own acts attains to pre-eminence ; the one in glory, the other in disgrace : compare with the good, ambrosia, or the moon, or the Ganges ; and with the bad, poison, or fire, or the river Karmnásá. Virtue and vice may be known to all by their natural development.

*Dohá 6.*

The good acquire goodness, and the vile vileness. Thus ambrosia has its proper effect in immortality, and poison has its effect in death.

*Chaupái.*

Why enumerate the faults and defects of the bad and the virtues of the good ; both are a boundless and unfathomable ocean. Hence occasionally virtue is reckoned as vice, improperly and from want of discrimination. For God has created both, but it is the Veda that has distinguished one from the other. The heroic legends and the Puránas also, no less than the Vedas, recognize every kind of good and evil as creatures of the creator, pain and pleasure, sin and religious merit ; night and day ; saint and sinner ; high caste and low caste ; demons and gods ; great and small ; life-giving ambrosia and deadly poison ; the visible world and the invisible God ; life and the

\* The churning of the ocean is one of the common-places of Hindu poetry, and the allusions to it in the Rámáyana are innumerable. With mount Mandara as a churning-stick, the great serpent Vásuki as a rope, and Náráyan himself in tortoise-form as the pivot on which to work, the gods and demons combined to churn the milky ocean. Thus were produced from its depth the moon ; the sacred cow, Surabhi or Káma-dhenu ; the goddess of wine, Varuni ; the tree of Paradise, Párijáta, or Kalpa-taru ; the heavenly nymphs, the Apsarás ; the goddess of beauty, Lakshmi or Sri ; and the physician of the gods, Dhanvantari. The cup of nectar which the latter held in his hand was seized and quaffed by the gods ; while the poison, which also was produced, was either claimed by the snake gods, or swallowed by Mahádeva ; whence comes the blackness of his throat, that gives him the name of *Níl Kanth*.



lord of life ; rich and poor ; the beggar and the king ; Kási and Magadha ;\* the Ganges and the Karmnásá ; the desert of Márwár and the rich plain of Málwá ; the Bráhman and the butcher ; heaven and hell ; sensual passion and asceticism ; the Vedas and the Tantras, and every variety of good and evil.

*Dohá 7.*

The creator has made the universe to consist of things animate and inanimate, good and evil : a saint like a swan takes the milk of goodness and rejects the worthless water.†

*Chaupái.*

When the creator gives men this faculty of judgment, they abandon error and become enamoured of the truth ; but conquered by time, temperament, or fate, even the good, as a result of their humanity, may err from virtue ; but Hari takes their body so to speak and corrects it, and removing all sorrow and sin cleanses it and glorifies them. If the bad through intercourse with the good do good, their inherent badness is not effaced. An impostor of fair outward show may be honoured on account of his garb, but in the end he is exposed and does not succeed ; like Kála-nemi, or Rávan, or Ráhu.‡ The good are honoured notwithstanding their mean appearance, like the bear Jamavant or the monkey Hanumán. Bad company is loss and good company is gain ; this is a truth recognized both by the world and the Veda. In company with the wind the dust flies heavenwards ; if it joins water, it becomes mud and sinks. According to the character of the house in which a parrot or *maina* is trained, it learns either to repeat the name of Ráma or to give abuse. With the ignorant, soot is mere refuse ; but it may make good ink and be used even for copying a Purána ; while water, fire, and air combined become an earth-refreshing rain-cloud.

*Dohá 8-11.*

The planets, medicines, water, air, clothes, all are good or bad things according as their accompaniments are good or bad ; and people observe this distinction. Both lunar fortnights are equal as regards darkness and light ; but a difference in name has been wisely made, and as the moon waxes or wanes the fortnight is held in high or low esteem. Knowing

\* Magadha (Bihár) is taken as the opposite to Kási, in consequence of its being the birth-place of Buddhism.

† To the swan (*ráj-hans*) is ascribed the fabulous faculty of being able to separate milk from water, after the two have been mixed together.

‡ Kála-nemi by assuming the form of an ascetic imposed for a time upon Hanumán, as Rávan did upon Sítá : and even Vishnu, at the churning of the ocean, was at first deceived by Ráhu, who appeared like one of the gods.



that the whole universe, whether animate or inanimate, is pervaded by the spirit of Ráma, I reverence with clasped hands the lotus feet of all, gods, giants, men, serpents, birds, ghosts, departed ancestors, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, demons of the night ; I pray ye all be gracious to me.

*Chaupái.*

By four modes of birth\* are produced 84 lakhs of species inhabiting the air, the water and the earth. With clasped hands I perform an act of adoration, recognizing the whole world as pervaded by the spirit of Sítá and Ráma. In your compassion regard me as your servant, and dissembling no longer be kind and affectionate. I have no confidence in the strength of my own wisdom, and therefore I supplicate you all. I would narrate the great deeds of Raghupati ; but my ability is little and his acts unfathomable. I am not conscious of any special qualification or capacity ; my intellect in short is beggarly while my ambition is imperial ; and I am thirsting for nectar, when not even skim milk is to be had. Good people all, pardon my presumption and listen to my childish babbling, as a father and mother delight to hear the lisping prattle of their little one. Perverse and malignant fools may laugh, who pick out faults in others wherewith to adorn themselves. Every one is pleased with his own rhymes, whether they be pungent, or insipid ; but those who praise another's voice are good men, of whom there are few in the world ; there are many enough like the rivers, which on getting a rain-fall swell out a flood of their own, but barely one like the generous ocean, which swells on beholding the fulness of the moon.

*Dohá 12.*

My lot is low, my purpose high ; but I am confident of one thing, that the good will be gratified to hear me, though fools may laugh.

*Chaupái.*

The laughter of fools will be grateful to me : the crow calls the *koil's* voice harsh. The goose ridicules the swan, and the frog the *chátak* ; so the low and vile abuse pure verse. As they have no taste for poetry nor love for Ráma, I am glad that they should laugh. If my homely speech and poor wit are fit subjects for laughter, let them laugh ; it is no fault of mine. If they have no understanding of true devotion to the Lord, the tale will seem insipid enough : but to the true and orthodox worshippers of Hari and Hara the story of Raghubar will be sweet as honey. The singer's devotion

\* The four *ákaras*, or modes of birth are named *Pindaja* or viviparous ; *andaja* or oviparous ; *swedaja*, born in sweat like lice ; and *udbhijja*, produced by sprouting, like a tree. The 84 lakhs of species are divided as follows : 9 lakhs of aquatic creatures, 27 lakhs of those attached to the earth, 11 lakhs of insects, 10 lakhs of birds, 23 lakhs of quadrupeds, and 4 lakhs of men. The literal meaning of *ákara* being a mine, *kháni* which has the same primary signification, is used for it in *Chaupái* 44.



to Ráma will by itself be sufficient embellishment to make the good hear and praise his melody. Though no poet, nor clever, nor accomplished; though unskilled in every art and science; though all the elegant devices of letters and rhetoric, and the countless variations of metre, and the infinite divisions of sentiment and style, and all the defects and excellencies of verse and the gift to distinguish between them are unknown to me, I declare and record it on a fair white sheet—

*Dohá 13.*

That though my style has not a single charm of its own, it has a charm known throughout the world, which men of discernment will ponder as they read—

*Charipáí.*

The gracious name of Raghupati; all-purifying essence of the Puránas and the Veda, abode of all that is auspicious, destroyer of all that is inauspicious, ever murmured in prayer by Umá and the great Tripurári. The most elegant composition of the most talented poet gives no pleasure, if the name of Ráma is not in it; in the same way as a lovely woman adorned with the richest jewels is vile if unclothed. But the most worthless production of the feeblest versifier, if adorned with the name of Ráma, is heard and repeated with reverence by the wise, like bees gathering honey: though the poetry has not a single merit, the glory of Ráma is manifested in it. This is the confidence which has possessed my soul: is there anything which good company fails to exalt? Thus smoke forgets its natural pungency, and with incense yields a sweet scent. My language is that in vulgar use, but my subject is the highest, the story of Ráma, enrapturing the world.

*Chhand 1.\**

Though rapturous lays befit his praise, who cleansed a world accurst,  
Yet Tulsi's rivulet of song may slake a traveller's thirst.  
How pure and blest on Siva's breast shew the vile stains of earth!  
So my poor song flows bright and strong illumed by Ráma's worth.

*Dohá 14. 15.*

From its connection with the glory of Ráma, my verse will be most grateful to every one; when you apply sandal to your forehead, do you think of it as merely a production of wood? Though a cow be black, its milk is pure and wholesome and all men drink it; and so, though my speech is

\* A *Chhand* is generally a somewhat enthusiastic outburst, in which the oft-repeated rhyme is a little apt to run away with the sense. Whenever one occurs, I shall indicate its special character by giving it a metrical version. Its first line always repeats some word that occurred in the last line of the preceding stanza.



rough, it tells the glory of Sítá and Ráma, and will therefore be heard and repeated with pleasure by sensible people.

*Chaupái.*

A diamond in a serpent's head, a ruby on a mountain top, a pearl in an elephant's head are all without beauty; but in a king's diadem or on a lovely woman they are lustrous in the extreme. Similarly, as wise men tell, poetry is born below, but inspired from above; for it is in answer to pious prayer that the muse leaves her heavenly abode and speeds to earth; without immersion in the fountain of Ráma's deeds, all labour and trouble count for nothing. A sensible poet understands this, and sings only of Hari, the redeemer, and his virtues. To recount the doings of common people is mere idle beating of the head, which the muse loaths. Genius is as it were a shell in the sea of the soul, waiting for the October rain of Inspiration; if a gracious shower falls, each drop is a pearl of poetry:

*Dohá 16.*

Then dexterously pierced and strung together on the thread of Ráma's adventures, they form a beautiful chain to be worn on a good man's breast.

*Chaupái.*

Men born in this grim iron age are outwardly swans, but inwardly as black as crows; walking in evil paths, abandoning the Veda, embodiments of falsehood, vessels of impurity, hypocrites, professing devotion to Ráma, but slaves of gold, of passion and of lust. Among them I give the first place to myself, a hypocrite alas! of the very first rank; but were I to tell all my vices, the list would so grow that it would have no end. I have therefore said but very little, but a word is enough for the wise. Let none of my hearers blame me for offering so many apologies; whoever is troubled in mind by them is more stupid and dull of wit than I am myself. Though I am no poet and have no pretensions to cleverness, I sing as best I can the virtues of Ráma. How unfathomable his actions, how shallow my poor world-entangled intellect! Before the strong wind that could uproot mount Meru, of what account is such a mere flock of cotton as I am? When I think of Ráma's infinite majesty, I tremble as I write.

*Dohá 17.*

For Sarasvati, Sesh-nág, Siva and Brahma, the Shástras, the Veda, the Puránas, all are unceasingly singing his perfection, yet fail to declare it.

*Chaupái.*

All know the greatness of the Lord, yet none can refrain from repeating it. For this reason the Veda also has declared many different modes of effectual worship. There is one God, passionless, formless, uncreated, the



universal soul, the supreme spirit, the all-pervading, whose shadow is the world; who has become incarnate and done many things, only for the love that he bears to his faithful people; all-gracious and compassionate to the humble; who in his mercy has refrained from anger even against the selfish and forward; restorer of the past; protector of the poor;\* all good, all-powerful, the Lord Raghuráj. In this belief the wise sing the glory of Hari; and their song thus becomes holy and meritorious. I, too, bowing my head to Ráma's feet, am emboldened to sing his fame, following a path which has been made easy by the divine bards who have trodden it before me:

*Dohá 18.*

As when a king has prepared a bridge over a broad stream, an ant, insignificant as it is, is able to cross without difficulty.

*Chaupái.*

In this manner reassuring myself, I undertake to recount Ráma's charming adventures, as they have been reverently told by Vyása and the other great poets, whose lotus-feet I adore, praying, Fulfil ye my desire; both the Sanskrit poets of these latter days who have sung of Raghupati, and also those of high intelligence who have written in Prákrit and the vulgar tongue. All who have been in time past, or who now are, or who hereafter shall be, I bow to all in the utmost good faith and sincerity. Be propitious and grant this boon that in assemblies of good men my song may be honoured! If the good and wise will not honour it, the silly poet has had all his labour in vain. The only fame, or poetry, or power, that is of any worth, is that which like Ganges water is good for all. The incongruity between Ráma's glory and my rude speech makes me doubt; but by your favour all will turn out well; for good sewing can be shown on coarse cloth no less than on silk. Be kind enough to think of this, and my style will then match the excellence of my theme.

*Dohá 19.*

A clear style and an exalted theme are both commendable; and when they are combined, an enemy even, forgetting his natural hostility, will repeat the strain. But such a combination is not to be acquired without genius, and genius I have none; so again and again I beg of you to bear with me while I sing the glory of Hari. The great poets are like the swans sporting in the Mánasa lake of Hari's deeds; look on me as a well-meaning child and make allowances.†

\* *Gharíb-naváz.* This is the first Persian word that has occurred in the poem.

† In Hindi poetry it is considered a beauty if a phrase is so worded as to be capable of two or more different interpretations. Thus the line rendered as above may be literally translated: Hearing my childish supplication, seeing my good desire, be compassionate towards me—which is the meaning I have expressed. But it might with



*Soratha 2.*

I reverence the lotus-feet of the great sage who composed the Rámáyana, smooth strains on rough topics and faultless though a story of the faulty.\* I reverence the four Vedas, which are like a boat in which to cross the ocean of existence, without ever dreaming of weariness, while recounting Ráma's excellent glory. I reverence the dust on the feet of Brahma, creator of this ocean-like world, from which have been produced men, good and bad; as of old from the same source came at once ambrosia, the moon, and the cow Kámadhenu, and also poison and intoxicating liquor.

*Dohá 20.*

Reverencing with clasped hands gods, Bráhmans, philosophers and sages, I pray: 'Be gracious to me and accomplish all my fair desire.'

*Chaupái.*

Again, I reverence the Sarasvati and the Ganges, both holy and beautiful streams, cleansing sin by a single draught or immersion, whose name as soon as uttered or heard at once removes error. I adore as I would my guru, or my natural parents, Siva and Párvati, protectors of the humble, daily benefactors, servants and courtiers in attendance on Sítá's Lord, and in every way Tulsi's true friends; who in their benevolence and considering the degeneracy of the times have themselves composed many spells in a barbarous language, incoherent syllables and unintelligible mutterings, mysterious revelations of the great Siva.† By his patronage I may make my story an agreeable one, and by meditating on Siva and Párvati may relate Ráma's adventures in a way that will give pleasure. It is only by his favour that my verse can be beautified, as a dark night by the moon and stars. Whoever in a devout spirit, with intelligence and attention, hears or repeats this lay of mine, he shall become full of true love for Ráma, and cleansed from worldly stains shall enjoy heavenly felicity.

equal correctness be rendered: Hearing my childish supplication, seeing their excellent beauty, be compassionate towards me. It is sufficient to note this peculiarity once for all; but there are an immense number of lines, in which, though the meaning which I have adopted seems to me on the whole the one most appropriate to the context, it by no means follows that other interpretations are not, from the grammarian's point of view, equally correct.

\* A literal rendering would be—Rough, soft, beautiful, faultless, full of faults. But there are two plays upon words; for *sakhar*, ordinarily 'rough' and therefore contrasted with *sakomal* soft, is also intended to bear the meaning—'relating to the demon Khar'; and similarly *dúshan sahít* 'full of faults' can be forced into meaning 'with the demon Dúshan.

† The allusion is to the magic spells and mystical formularies of the Tantras, which are for the most part mere strings of uncouth and utterly unmeaning words. They all purport to have been revealed by Siva himself to Párvati.



*Dohá 21.*

Whether I am awake or dreaming, if Siva and Gauri grant me their favour, then my words shall come true and this shall be the effect of my song, though it be in the vulgar tongue.

*Chaupái.*

I reverence the holy city of Ayudhyá and the river Sarjú cleansing from all earthly impurity. I salute also the inhabitants of the city, for whom the Lord had no little affection; seeing that he ignored all the sin of Sítá's calumniator and set men's minds at rest.\* I reverence Kausalya, eastern heaven from which glory was diffused over the whole world; whence Raghupati arose as a lovely moon, giving joy to the world, but blighting like a frost the lotus leaves of vice. To King Dasarath and all his queens, incarnations of virtue and felicity, I make obeisance in word, deed, and heart, saying Be gracious to me as to a son or a servant, O parents of Ráma, that acme of greatness, ye in whose creation the creator surpassed himself.

*Soratha 3.*

I reverence the king of Avadh, who had such true love for Ráma's feet, that when parted from his lord, his life snapped and parted too like a straw.

*Chaupái.*

I salute the king of Videha with all his court who had the greatest affection for Ráma; though he concealed his devotion under royal state, yet it broke out as soon as he saw him. Then next I throw myself at the feet of Bharat, whose constancy and devotion surpass description; whose soul like a bee thirsting for sweets was ever hovering round the lotus-feet of Ráma. I reverence too the lotus-feet of Lachhman, cool, comely and source of delight to their worshippers; whose glory is as it were the standard for the display of Ráma's pure emblazonment. Thou who, to remove the terrors of the world, didst become incarnate in the form of the thousand-headed serpent for the sake of the universe, be ever propitious to me, O son of Sumitra, ocean of compassion, store-house of perfection. I bow also to Ripusúdan (*i. e.* Satrughna) the generous hero, Bharat's constant companion; and to the conqueror Hanumán, whose glory has been told by Ráma himself—

\* The calumniator was a dhobi, whose wife had gone away without asking his permission to her father's house and had stayed there three days. On her return her husband refused to take her in, saying, Do you think I am a Ráma who takes back his Sítá after she has been living for eleven months in another man's house? When this came to Ráma's ears, he showed his respect for the delicacy of his subjects by dismissing Sítá, and instead of punishing the dhobi promoted him to honour.



*Soratha 4.*

The son of the Wind, of profound intelligence, like a consuming fire in the forest of vice, in whose heart Ráma, equipped with bow and arrows, has established his home.

*Chaupái.*

The monkey-lord, the king of bears and demons, Angad and all the monkey host, I throw myself at the benign feet of them all, for though contemptible in appearance they yet found Ráma. I worship all his faithful servants—whether birds, beasts, gods, men, or demons—all his unselfish adherents. I worship Sukadeva, Sanat-Kumára, Nárada, and the other sages of excellent renown, putting my head to the ground and crying, ‘My lords, be gracious to your servant.’ I propitiate the lotus-feet of Janak’s daughter, Jánaki, mother of the world, best beloved of the fountain of mercy, by whose grace I may attain to unclouded intelligence. Again in heart, in word and deed, I worship the all-worthy feet of Raghunáth, the glance of whose lotus eyes like an arrow from the bow rejoices his votaries by destroying all their misfortunes.

*Dohá 22.*

As a word and its meaning are inseparable, and as a wave cannot be distinguished from the water of which it is composed, the difference being only in the name; so with Ráma and Sítá, the refuge of the distressed, whom I adore.

*Chaupái.*

I adore the name of Ráma as borne by Raghubar,\* the source of all light, whether of the fire, or the sun, or the moon; substance of the triune god; vital breath of the Veda; the passionless; the incomparable; the source of all good; the great spell muttered by Mahádev and enjoined by him as necessary to salvation even at Kási. By confessing its power, Ganes obtained the first place among the gods;† by its power, though he muttered it backwards, the great poet Válmiki attained to purity; by its repetition, after she had heard from Siva that it was equal to a thousand names,

\* For there are two other Rámas, besides Ráma-chandra; viz. Parasu-ráma and Bala-ráma.

† According to the legend: the gods were disputing among themselves as to which of them should be accounted the first. To settle the matter, Brahma proposed that they all should race round the world. They started accordingly, each on the animal which he most delighted to ride; and Ganes being mounted, as was his custom, on nothing better than a rat, was of course soon left far behind. In his distress the sage Nárada appeared to him and suggested that he should write the word Ráma in the dust and pace round that, for in it was virtually included all creation. This he did and returned to Brahma who at once awarded him the prize.



Bhawáni was able to join her husband ;\* while he, Mahádev, in his delight on beholding her simple faith, assumed the woman, making that ornament of her sex the ornament of his own body. Again, it was by the power of this name that the poison swallowed by Mahádev was converted into ambrosia.

*Dohá 23.*

Devotion to Ráma, says Tulsi Dás, is like the rich season of the rains ; but the two syllables of Ráma's name are best of all, like the months of Sáwan and Bhádon—

*Chaupái.*

Two sweet and gracious syllables, the eyes as it were of the soul, easy to remember, satisfying every wish, a gain in this world, and felicity in the next ; most delightful to utter, to hear, or to remember ; as dear to Tulsi as the inseparable Ráma and Lachhman. My love is inflamed as I speak of these mystic syllables, as intimately connected as the universal soul and the soul of man ; twin brothers like Nara and Náráyan, preservers of the world, redeemers of the elect ; bright jewels in the ears of beauteous Faith ; pure and beneficent as the sun and the moon ; like sweetness and contentment, the inseparable attributes of ambrosia ; like the tortoise and serpent, supporters of the world ; like the bee and the lotus of a pious soul ; and as sweet to the tongue as Hari and Balaráma were sweet to Jasodá.

*Dohá 24.*

Like a royal umbrella or jewelled diadem over all the other letters of the alphabet shine the two consonants in Ráma's name.

*Chaupái.*

A name may be regarded as equivalent to what is named, the connection being such as subsists between a master and servant. Both name and form are shadows of the Lord, who rightly understood is unspeakable and uncreated. They are sometimes wrongly distinguished as greater and less ; but the wise will understand my explanation of the difference between them. See now, the form is of less importance than the name ; for without the name you cannot come to a knowledge of the form ; if the very form be in your hand, still without knowing the name, it is not recognized ; but meditate on the name without seeing the form, and your soul is filled with devotion.

\* One day when Siva had finished eating, he called to his wife Párvati to come and take her food too before it got cold. She pleaded that she had not yet finished repeating, according to her daily wont, the thousand names of Vishnu ; whereupon her husband instructed her that it would suffice if she said the mere name of 'Ráma' once, for that had as much virtue as all the thousand. She at once believed him and complied ; and the god was so pleased at her ready faith that in her honour he assumed the Ardha-nári, or half-male, half-female form.



The mystery of name and form is unspeakable and cannot be told, but delightful to those who have intuition of it ; the name acting as a witness between the material and immaterial forms of the deity, and being a guide and interpreter to both.

*Dohá 25.*

Place the name of Ráma as a jewelled lamp at the door of your lips and there will be light, as you will, both inside and out.

*Chaupái.*

As his tongue repeats this name, the ascetic wakes to life, his thoughts free from passion and all detached from the world ; he enjoys the incomparable felicity of God, who is unspeakable, unblemished, without either name or form. Those who would understand mysteries, by repeating this name understand them ; the religious, who repeat this name absorbed in contemplation, become workers of miracles,\* and acquire the power of rendering themselves invisible and the like ; those who repeat it when burdened with affliction are freed from their troubles and become happy. Thus there are in the world four kinds of Ráma-worshippers, all four good, holy and beneficent ; but of these four sages who trust in the name they are the most dear to the Lord who understand his mysteries. His name is great in the four Vedas and in the four ages of the world, but in this fourth age especially there is no other hope.

*Dohá 26.*

All free from sensual passions and absorbed in devout affection to Ráma, the soul disports itself like a fish in the ambrosial lake of his beloved name.

*Chaupái.*

The Supreme may be regarded both as devoid of all qualities and also as the quality of goodness ; in either aspect it is unspeakable, unfathomable, without beginning and without parallel. To my mind the name is greater than both forms, for by its own might it has brought both under its sway. My friends must not take this as an exaggeration on my part, for I say it confidently and with sincere devotion. The knowledge of the supreme is of two kinds, like fire which is either internal or visible ; each is in itself incomprehensible but is comprehended by means of the name ; and there-

\* The miraculous powers that can be acquired by perfect saints, or siddhás, are reckoned as eight in number, and are called *animá, mahimá, garimá, laghimá, prápti, prákámya, isitwá, and vasittwá*. These words denote the faculty : 1st, of becoming infinitely small ; 2nd, of becoming infinitely great ; 3rd, of becoming infinitely heavy ; 4th, of becoming infinitely light ; 5th, of obtaining whatever one wishes ; 6th, of doing whatever one wishes ; 7th, of absolute supremacy ; 8th, of absolute subjugation.



fore I say that the name is greater than either Brahm or Ráma. For the one immortal, true, sentient, complete and blissful Brahm is all-pervading; yet though such an unchangeable Lord is in our very soul, the whole creation is in slavery and wretchedness, till he is revealed in definite shape and is energized by the name; as a jewel is not valued, till it is so called.

*Doha 27.*

Thus the virtue of the name is infinite and transcends the supreme; and in my judgment is greater than Ráma himself.

*Chaupái.*

From the love that he bore to his followers, Ráma took the form of a man and by himself enduring misery secured their happiness. By incessantly and devoutly repeating his name, all the faithful may attain to felicity. Ráma himself redeemed only one woman, the ascetic's wife;\* but his name has corrected the errors of millions of sinners. To gratify the Rishi Viswamitra, Ráma wrought the destruction of Suketu's daughter Tádaká with her son Marícha and his army; but as the sun puts an end to night, so his name has scattered all crime and pain and despair. In his own person Ráma broke the bow of Siva, but his glorious name has broken the fear of death; † the Lord himself restored to life only the forest of Dandaka, ‡ but his name has sanctified countless generations; the son of Raghu destroyed many demons, but his name has destroyed all the evil of the world.

*Doha 28.*

Raghunáth conferred immortality on all his own faithful servants even down to the vulture Jatáyu; § but his name, precious theme of the Vedas, has delivered innumerable wretches.

*Chaupái.*

Ráma, as all men know, extended his protection to Sugríva and Vibhíshana; but his name has protected countless supplicants, shining forth

\* Ahalya, the wife of the Rishi Gautama, having been seduced by the god Indra, was cursed by her indignant lord and doomed to remain alone and invisible in the forest for thousands of years till Ráma should come and redeem her.

† Here is a play upon words which cannot be preserved in the translation; for in the first half of the couplet the word *bhava* is to be taken as a name of Siva, while in the second half it means life; or rather death; since according to Hindu ideas all conscious life is merely a preparation for inevitable death.

‡ Dandaka is the name of the pathless forest near the Godavari, where Sítá was stolen away by Rávan.

§ The bird Jatáyu stopped the chariot in which Sítá was being carried off by Rávan and was mortally wounded by the giant, but he lived long enough to give Ráma tidings of his beloved. In return for his faithful services Ráma and Lakshman themselves performed his funeral rites.



gloriously in the world and the Veda. Ráma assembled a host of bears and monkeys and had no little trouble to build his bridge ; his name can dry up the ocean of life ; meditate thereon, O ye faithful. Ráma killed in battle Rávan and all his family and returned with Sítá\* to his own city, a king to Avadh his capital, while gods and saints hymned his praises ; but his servants, if only they affectionately meditate on his name, vanquish with ease the whole army of error, and move, absorbed in interior ecstasy, without even a dream of sorrow.

*Dohá 29.*

The Name is greater than either Brahm or Ráma, and is the best gift of the best giver ; this Mahádev knew when he selected it from the hundred *crores*† of verses in the Rámáyana.

*Chaupái.*

By the power of this name the blessed god of curst attire, even the great Siva, acquired immortality ; by the power of this name Sukadeva, Sanat-kumára, and all saints, sages and ascetics have enjoyed heavenly raptures ; Nárad too acknowledged its power, himself as dear to Hara and Hari as Hari is dear to the world ; by repeating this name Prahlád through the Lord's grace became the crown of the faithful.‡ Dhruva in his distress repeated the name of Hari, and was rewarded by a fixed and incomparable station in the heavens ;§ by meditating on this holy name Hanumán won and kept the affection of Ráma ; by the power of Hari's name Ajámil|| and

\* Sugriva, the monkey chief, assisted Ráma in his search for Sítá by shewing him the ornaments she had purposely dropped on the way ; and Ráma rewarded him by installing him as sovereign of Kishkindyá in the place of his brother Báli. Similarly, Vibhishana was made king of Lanká in the room of Rávan.

† Of these hundred crores it is said that Siva distributed 33 crores to each of the three worlds. The one crore that remained over he similarly divided into three sets of 33 lákhs each ; the odd lákhs into three sets of 30 thousand each ; the odd thousand again into three sets of three hundred each ; the odd hundred into three sets of thirty-three each and finally the one remaining *sloka* into three sets of ten letters each. The two letters that remained over, being the two consonants in the name of Ráma, he kept for himself as containing the gist of the whole matter.

‡ Prahlád, the pious son of the impious Hiranya-Kasipu who was destroyed by Vishnu in the Narsinh avatar, was made equal to Indra for life and finally united with Vishnu.

§ Dhruva, the son of Uttánapáda, being slighted by his step-mother, left his home with the determination of winning himself a name in the world. By the advice of the seven Rishis, he devoted himself to the service of Vishnu, and was finally exalted by the god to the heavens, where he shines as the pole-star.

|| According to the history given in the 6th Skandha of the Srí Bhágavat, Ajámil was a Bráhman of Kanauj, of most dissolute and abandoned life. By a happy chance the youngest of the ten sons whom he had by a prostitute was named Náráyan ; and the father when at the point of death happened to summon him to his side. But the



the elephant and the harlot all three obtained salvation : why farther extend the list ? not even the incarnate Ráma could exhaust it.

*Dohá 30.*

The name of Ráma is as the tree of Paradise, the centre of all that is good in the world ; and whoever meditates upon it, becomes (says Tulsi Dás) transformed as it were from a vile hemp stick into a sweet smelling Tulsi plant.

*Chaupái.*

In all four ages of the world ; in all time, past, present, or future ; in the three spheres of earth, heaven and hell ; any creature that repeats this name becomes blessed. This is the verdict of the Veda, the Puránas and all the saints—that the love of Ráma is the fruit of all virtue. In the first age, contemplation ; in the second age, sacrifice ; in the Dvápar age, temple worship was the appointed propitiation ; but in this vile and impure iron age, where the soul of man floats like a fish in an ocean of sin, in these fearful times, the Name is the only tree of life, and by meditating on it all commotion is stilled. In these evil days neither good deeds, nor piety, nor spiritual wisdom is of any avail, but only the name of Ráma : his name is as it were the wisdom and the might of Hanumán to expose and destroy the Kálanemi-like\* wiles of the wicked world.

god Náráyan, thus casually invoked, himself came in answer to the call, and rescued the guilty soul from the demons that were about to carry it off to hell.

The story of the elephant is given in the 8th Skandha of the same Purána. An alligator had seized him by the foot while bathing, and though he struggled desperately for 2000 years, he was unable to rid himself of his enemy, and at last was deserted by all his wives and children. He then began to give himself up for lost ; but reflecting on the pertinacity of the alligator he came to the conclusion that the creature must be the embodiment of all the sins he had committed in previous existences and that god alone could save him. He therefore addressed a fervent prayer to Náráyan, who thus invoked by name came down from heaven and with his discus Sudarsan cut off the alligator's head and delivered the suppliant.

The 8th Chapter of the 11th Skandha gives the story of the penitent prostitute Pingalá.

\* Kálanemi was the uncle of Rávan, who promised him half his kingdom if he would kill Hanumán. Accordingly he assumed the garb of a devotee and retired to a solitary hermitage on a mountain-top, where in course of time he was visited by Hanumán. The latter accepted the hospitality of the holy man, as he took him to be, but before eating went to a pond close by to bathe. Here as soon as he put his foot in the water, it was seized by a crocodile, which, however, he soon killed, and out of its dead body sprung a beautiful nymph, who had long been under a curse. She bade him beware of Kálanemi, who was sitting deep in thought and already enjoying in anticipation the kingdom which he made sure he had secured. His dream was rudely broken by Hanumán who seized him in his strong arm, and hurled him headlong through the air, till he fell at Rávan's feet in Lanká.



*Dohá 31.*

As Narsinh was manifested to destroy the enemy of heaven Haranyakasipu, and protect Prahlád, so is Ráma's name for the destruction of the world and the protection of the pious.

*Chaupái.*

By repeating this name, whether in joy or in sadness, in action or in repose, bliss is diffused all around. Meditating upon it and bowing my head to Raghunáth, I compose these lays in his honour; he will correct all my defects, whose mercy is mercy inexhaustible. Thou art my good Lord, I thy poor servant; bear this in mind and graciously protect me. By the experience of the world and the revelation of the Veda, Ráma is known as a kind master, hearing prayer and acknowledging affection. Rich or poor, villager or citizen, learned or unlearned, pure or impure, good poet or bad poet, all according to their ability extol him as their king; and he, good, amiable and gracious, lord of incomparable compassion, hears and accepts their honest attempts, recognizing in their words both devotion and a measure of ability. This is the way with earthly kings, and Ráma is their crown; he is satisfied with simple piety though in one who is duller and feebler of intellect even than I am.

*Dohá 32-33.*

The merciful Ráma will regard the love and zeal of his poor servant, he who made a ship out of a rock and wise ministers out of monkeys and bears; although I am a bye-word, and every one says Ráma is exposed to ridicule in that he, being such a lord, has such a servant as Tulsi Dás.

*Chaupái.*

My presumption is indeed very sad, as villanous and disgusting as hell; but seeing me alarmed with these terrors of my own, Ráma would not dream of regarding them; but hearing and with his own eyes perceiving my good faith, the Lord applauded my devout intention. Though my story is spoilt by the telling, Ráma is satisfied and accounts it good, since the will is good. The Lord is not mindful of a chance fault, but on every occasion he considers the heart. Thus the very crime, for which he, like a huntsman killed Báli, was in turn the sin of Sugriva and again of Vibhíshan; but in their case Ráma did not dream of censure, but honoured them both at the meeting with Bharat and commended them in open court.

*Dohá 34-36.*

The lord under the tree and the monkey on the bough he accounted all equal to himself: says Tulsi, there is no master so generous as Ráma. O Ráma, thy goodness is good to all, and if so, then good to Tulsi also. Thus



declaring my merits and defects and again bowing my head to all, I proceed to tell the glorious acts of Raghubar, by the sound of which all the sin of the world is effaced.

*Chaupái.*

Now listen all in friendly wise while I relate the story as I have heard it, as it was communicated by Yájnavalkya to the great sage Bharadwája. It was first of all composed by Siva and graciously revealed to Umá and again declared to Káka-bhusundi, known to be chief among the votaries of Ráma. From him Yájnavalkya received it, and he recited it to Bharadwája. These listeners and reciters were of equal virtue and had an equal insight into Hari's sportive actions. Their intellect comprehended all time, as it were a plum in the palm of the hand; other intelligent votaries of Hari have also in different ways heard, understood and spoken.

*Dohá 37-38.*

I again heard the story from my own master at Súkarkhet, (*i. e.* Soron)\* without understanding it, when I was quite a child and had no sense. And how could such a dull creature, being both ignorant and eaten up with worldly impurities, understand so mysterious a legend and a dialogue between such sage interlocutors.

*Chaupái.*

But my master repeated it time after time, till at length I understood as much as could be expected; and I now put it down in the vulgar tongue, as well as my understanding allows me; with my heart fixed on Hari's messenger (*i. e.* Hanumán), I speak with all the little sense, judgment and ability that I possess. The story that I have to tell clears my own doubts as it does every other error and delusion, and is a raft on which to cross the ocean of existence. The story of Ráma is a resting-place for the intellect; a universal delight; a destroyer of worldly impurity; an antidote to the venom of passion; a match to enkindle the fire of wisdom; the cow of plenty of this iron age; flowers of ambrosia to make good men immortal; a stream of nectar on the face of the earth; destroyer of death; a snake to devour toad-like error; befriending the good by the destruction of hell, in the same way as Párvati befriended the gods by destroying the army of demons; like Lakshmi rising from the sea in the assembly of the saints; immovable as the earth that supports all the weight of creation; like the Jamuná, to put to shame the angel of death; like Kási the saviour of all living creatures; as dear to Ráma as the pure Tulsi; as dear to Tulsi

\* Soron, the modern name, is a corruption of Súkara-gráma (Boar-town). The place is still much frequented by pilgrims; the principal concourse being on the festival of the Varáha (or Boar) avatár. Súkara-gráma = Súar-gánw = Súaránw = Soron.



Dás as his own heart's desire ; as dear to Siva as the daughter of Mount Mekal (*i. e.* the Narmada) bestower of all perfection and prosperity ; like Aditi gracious mother of all the gods ; the perfect outcome of love and devotion to Raghubar.

*Dohá 39.*

The story of Ráma is as the river Mandákini and a good intention like Mount Chitrakút, while sincere affection is as it were the forest where Ráma and Sítá love to abide.

*Chaupái.*

The legend of Ráma is like the delectable wishing-stone ; or as fair jewels to adorn Wisdom, the saint's bride ; His perfection is the joy of the world, conferring a state of virtue, wealth and eternal salvation ;\* is a saintly instructor in wisdom, asceticism, and spiritual contemplation ; like the physician of the gods to heal the fearful diseases of life ; the very parent of devotion to Sítá and Ráma ; the seed of all holy vows and practices ; the destroyer of sin, of pain and of sorrow ; our guardian in this world and the next ; the Prime Minister and the General of Kingly Counsel ; a very Agastya† to drink up the illimitable ocean of desire ; a young lion in the forest of life to attack the wild elephants of lust, anger and sensual impurity ; as dear to Siva as the presence of a highly-honoured guest ; as an abundant shower to quench the fire of meanness ; a potent spell against the venom of the world ; effacing from the forehead the deep brand of evil destiny ; dispelling the darkness of error like the rays of the sun ; like a shower on a rice-field refreshing the aridity of prayer ; like the tree of Paradise, granting every desire ; like Hari and Hara accessible and gracious to all servants ; like the stars in the clear autumn sky of the poet's mind ; like the richness of life enjoyed by Ráma's votaries ; like the perfect felicity that is the reward of virtue ; like the assembly of the faithful in benevolence and composure ; like a swan in the pure lake of the believer's soul ; like the abundant flood of Ganga's purifying stream.

\* The reading of all the copies I have seen is *Dáni mukti dhan dharm dhám ke* ; and this accordingly I have translated. But *dhám* might, with advantage, be corrected to *kám*, in which case the enumeration would be the ordinary four-fold one of the ends of human existence viz. *dharm, kám, artha, moksha*, 'religion, pleasure, wealth and final salvation.' It is, however, possible that Tulsi may purposely have suppressed *kám*, pleasure, as unworthy to be accounted a *τελος* ; though in many other passages he includes it. *Dhám* may also be translated the Supreme Being, in which sense it gives a name to the sect of the Dhámis, or disciples of Prán Náth.

† As Agastya was one day worshipping by the sea-side, a wave came and washed away some of his altar furniture ; whereupon in three draughts he drank the whole ocean dry.



*Dohá 40-41.*

Ráma's perfect merit is like a strong fire to consume the dry wood of schism and heresy, evil practices and worldly deceit, hypocrisy and infidelity. His acts are like the rays of the full moon that give pleasure to all, but are specially consoling to the souls of the pious like the lotus and the *chakor*.

*Chaupái.*

All the questions that Bhawáni asked, with Sankara's replies thereto, I now proceed to give in substance, with agreeable diversity of style. No one is to be astonished if he should happen not to have heard any particular legend before; for a wise man on hearing for the first time any marvellous act will feel no surprise, reasoning thus with himself: I know well that there is no limit in the world to the stories about Ráma, for he has in various forms become incarnate, and the verses of the Rámáyana are some thousand millions in number; his glorious acts are of myriad diversity and have been sung by sages in countless ways. So indulge no doubts, but listen reverently and devoutly.

*Dohá 42.*

Ráma is infinite, his perfections infinite, and his legends of immeasurable extent; men of enlightened understanding will therefore wonder at nothing they hear.

*Chaupái.*

Having in this manner put away all doubt, I place on my head the dust from the lotus-feet of my master, and with folded hands making a general obeisance, that no fault may attach to my telling of the story, and bowing my head reverently before Siva, I proceed to sing of Ráma's excellent glory. In this *Sambat* year of 1631, I write with my head at Hari's feet, on Tuesday the 9th of the sweet month of Chait at the city of Avadh; on the day when the Scriptures say Ráma was born; when the spirits of all holy places there assemble, demons, serpents, birds, men, saints and gods, and there offer homage to Raghunáth, while the enlightened keep the great birth-day festival and hymn Ráma's high glory.

*Dohá 43.*

Pious crowds bathe in the all-purifying stream of the Sarjú, and murmur Ráma's name, while his dark and beautiful form is imprinted on their heart.

*Chaupái.*

The Vedas and Puránas declare that sin is cleansed by the mere sight or touch of this holy stream as well as by bathing in or drinking of it. Its



immeasurable grandeur is indescribable even by the pure intelligence of Sarasvati. The city, exalting to Ráma's heaven,\* beautiful, celebrated through all worlds, is so all-purifying that countless as are the number of animate species that result from the four modes of birth, yet every individual that is freed from the body at Avadh is free for ever. Knowing it to be in every way charming, a bestower of success and a mine of auspiciousness, I there made a beginning of my sacred song, which will destroy in those who hear it the mad phrenzy of lust: its mere name—lake of Ráma's acts—serves to refresh the ear, while the soul, like an elephant escaping from a forest on fire with lust, plunges into it and gains relief; delight of the sages, as composed by Sambhu, holy and beautiful; consuming the three ill conditions of sin, sorrow and want; putting an end to the evil practices and impurities of the wicked world; first made by Mahádeva and buried in the deep lake of his own soul till at an auspicious moment he declared it to Umá; thus Siva looking into his own soul and rejoicing gave it the excellent name of Rám-charit-mánas.† And this is the blessed legend that I repeat; hear it, good people, reverently and attentively.

*Dohá 44.*

Now meditating upon Umá and him who has a bull emblazoned on his standard (*i. e.* Mahádeva) I explain the connection, shewing how it is a lake and in what manner it is formed and for what reason it has spread through the world.‡

*Chaupái.*

By the blessing of Sambhu a bright idea has come into the poet Tulsi's mind regarding the Rám-charit-mánas, which I will state as well as I can, subject to the correction of those good people whose attention I invite. The heart is as it were a deep place in a land of good thoughts, the Vedas and Puránas are the sea, and saints are as clouds, which rain down praises of Ráma in sweet, grateful and auspicious showers; the sportive actions related of him are like the inherent purity and cleansing power of rain-water, while devotion, which is beyond the power of words to describe, is its sweetness and coolness. When such a shower falls on the rice-fields of vir-

\* The compound may also mean,—giving a home to Ráma—and probably both meanings are intended.

† From this it will be seen that the name which Tulsi Dás himself gave to his poem was not 'the Rámáyana,' but the Rám-charit-mánas; a name which may be interpreted to mean either the lake or the soul of Ráma's acts. In the stanza above translated, the word is first taken in the one sense, and then in the other; and as there is no English word with the same double signification, some obscurity is unavoidable.

‡ The words may also bear the following secondary meaning: I relate the whole history, shewing how the great soul became incarnate and why it dwelt in the world.



tue, it gives new life to the faithful, and as its holy drops fall to the earth they are collected in the channel supplied by the ears, and flowing into the lake of the soul fill it and then settle down permanently cool, beautiful and refreshing.

*Dohá 45.*

This pure and holy lake has four beautiful *gháts*, viz. the four charming dialogues contrived by divine wisdom :

*Chaupái.*

The seven Books are its beautiful flights of steps which the eyes of the soul delight to look upon ; the unqualified and unsullied greatness of Raghupati may be described as its clear and deep expanse. The glory of Ráma and Sítá as its ambrosial water ; the similes as its pretty wavelets ; the stanzas as its beautiful lotus-beds ; the elegance of expression as lovely mother-of-pearl ; the *chhands*, *sorathas* and couplets as many-coloured lotus flowers ; the incomparable sense, sentiment and language as the lotus-pollen, filaments and fragrance ; the exalted action as beautiful swarms of bees ; the sage moral reflections as swans ; the rhythm, involutions and all poetical artifices as diverse graceful kinds of fish ; the precepts regarding the four ends of life, the wise sayings, the thoughtful judgments, the nine styles of composition,\* the prayers, penance, abstraction and asceticism, of which examples are given, are all the beautiful living creatures in the lake ; the eulogies on the faithful, the saints, and the holy name are like flocks of water-birds ; the religious audience are like circling mango groves and their faith like the Spring season ; the expositions of all the phases of devotion and of tenderness and generosity are like the trees and canopying creepers ; self-denial and holy vows are as flowers, and wisdom as the fruit ; the love for Hari's feet as the sound of the Vedas ; and all other stories and episodes as the parrots and cuckoos and many kinds of birds.

*Dohá 46.*

Pleasant is the sporting of the birds in grove, garden, or parterre, where good intention like a gardener bedews the eyes with the water of affection.

*Chaupái.*

Those who accurately recite these lays are like the diligent guardians of the lake ; the men and women who reverently hear them, these excellent

\* The 9 poetical styles (or Indian Muses) are the *Sringár-ras*, or erotic ; the *Hásya-ras*, or comic ; the *Karuná-ras*, or elegiac ; the *Bír-ras*, or heroic ; the *Raudra-ras*, or tragic ; the *Bhayának-ras*, or melancholic ; the *Vibhatsa-ras*, or satiric ; the *Shánt-ras*, or didactic ; and the *Adbhut-ras*, or sensational.



people are like its owners. Sensual wretches are like the cranes and crows that have no part in this pond nor ever come near it; for here are no prurient and seductive stories like the snails, frogs, and scum on the water, and therefore the lustful crow and greedy crane, if they do come, are disappointed. There is much difficulty in getting to this lake, and it is only by the favour of Ráma that any one reaches it. For there are difficulties of evil society; rocks of heresy; wicked words like tigers, lions, and serpents; the various intanglements of domestic affairs, like vast insurmountable mountains; sensual desires like a dense forest full of wild delusions; and unsound reasoning like a raging flood.

*Dohá 47.*

For those who have not the support of faith nor the company of the saints, nor fervent love for Raghunáth; for them this lake is very hard of access.

*Chaupái.*

Again, if any one laboriously makes his way to it, but becomes overpowered by sleep and feverishness, a strange torpor and numbness settle on his soul, and though he is on the spot the luckless wretch makes no ablution. Having neither bathed in the lake nor drunk of it, he goes away in his pride, and when some one comes to enquire of him he abuses it. But those who by the blessing of Ráma gaze upon it, and deterred by no difficulties, reverently bathe, are relieved from the fierce flames of sin, sorrow and pain, and being sincerely devoted to Ráma will never abandon it. If, my friend, you would bathe in this lake, be diligent to keep company with the good. As for myself, having thus with the mind's eye contemplated it, my poetical faculty has become clear and profound, my heart swells with joy and rapture and overflows in a torrent of ecstatic devotion. My song pours on like a river flooded with Ráma's bright renown; like the river Sarju, fountain of bliss, with religion and theology for its two fair banks; a holy stream rejoicing the pious soul (*or* born of the Mánas lake) sweeping away all worldly impurities like the trees and roots on its bank.

*Dohá 48.*

The three kinds of hearers in the assembly are like the towns, villages and hamlets on the river side, while the saints are like the incomparable city of Avadh, full of all that is auspicious.

*Chaupái.*

The beautiful Sarju, as it were the glory of Ráma, has united with the Ganges of devotion, and the magnificent river Son, like the warlike power of Ráma and his brother, has joined them as a third. Between the two, the Ganges stream of devotion shines clear in its wisdom and self-control, while



the combined flood destroying the triple curse of humanity, is absorbed in the mighty ocean of very Ráma. The united stream of the Mánas-born Sarju and the Ganges purifies the pious listener, while the various tales and episodes interspersed here and there are the groves and gardens on its opposite banks; the description of the marriage and wedding procession of Umá and Siva are like the innumerable fish in the water; the joy and gladness that attended Ráma's birth are like beautiful swarms of bees.

*Dohá 49.*

The childish sports of the four brothers are like the stores of goodly merchandise; the virtuous king and queen and their court like the bees and water-birds.

*Chaupái.*

The charming story of Sítá's marriage like the bright gleam of the flashing river; the many ingenious questions like the boats on the stream; the appropriate and judicious answers like the boatmen; again, the argumentative discussions show like crowding travellers; the wrath of Bhrigunáth like the rushing torrent; Ráma's soft speech like the well arranged gháts; the marriage festivities of Ráma and Lakshman like the grateful swell of the tide; the thrill of pleasure that spreads through the delighted audience like the ecstatic feelings of the virtuous bathers; the auspicious preparations for marking Rama's forehead with the *tilak* like the crowds assembled on holidays; and like the river mud is Kaikeyi's evil counsel, the cause of many calamities.

*Dohá 50.*

Like prayers and sacrifices effectual to remove every misfortune are Bharat's virtuous acts; while the corruptions of the world, and sinful men, and slanderers are like the scum on the water and the cranes and crows.

*Chaupái.*

This river of glory is beautiful in each of the six seasons, bright and holy exceedingly at all times. In winter there is the marriage of Siva with the daughter of the snowy mountains; in the dewy days the glad rejoicings at the Lord's birth; the account of the preparations for Ráma's wedding are for the delightful and auspicious spring; Ráma's intolerable banishment, the story of his rough journeyings and exposure to the sun and wind are the hot-weather; his encounters with fierce demons, by which he gladdens the hosts of heaven, are like the rains that refresh the fields; the prosperity of his reign, his meekness and greatness, are like the clear, bountiful and lovely autumn\*; the recital of the virtues of Sítá, that jewel of

\* The six Hindu seasons, to which allusion is here made, are Hemant, winter; Sisir, the early spring; Basant, the spring; Gríshm, the hot weather; Varshá, the rains; and Sarad, the autumn.



faithful wives, is as the undefiled and excellent water; the amiability of Bharat as its unvarying coolness.

*Dohá 51.*

Their looks and words at meeting, their mutual love and laughter, the true fraternal affection of the four brothers are as the water's sweet odour.

*Chaupái.*

My suppliant address and self-depreciation and modesty correspond to the singular lightness of good water, which is anything but a defect. This marvellous lymph works its effect by the mere hearing, quenching the thirst of desire and cleansing the soul of impurity; it resuscitates true love to Ráma and puts an end to all the sin and sorrow of the world, draining life of its weariness, comforting with true comfort, destroying sin and pain and poverty and error, dispelling lust and passion and phrenzy and infatuation, and promoting pure intelligence and detachment from the world. Those who reverently drink or bathe in this stream, from their soul is effaced all sin and distress; those who do not cleanse their heart in it are wretches whom the world has ruined, turning back, hapless creatures! like a panting deer that has seen a river in a mirage.

*Dohá 52-54.*

Thus have I declared to the best of my ability the virtues of this excellent water, and having plunged my own soul in it, and ever remembering Bhawáni and Sankara I proceed with my delectable story. I will first repeat in substance the original conversation, with the questions put by Bharadwája when he found the Muni Yajnavalkya; and laying my soul at the lotus feet of Raghupati and thus securing his patronage, I will sing the meeting of the two great saints and their auspicious discourse.

*Thus ends the Prologue and from here the real action of the poem commences.*

